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Extracts from the Publication NIE 14.3-66, the North Vietnamese Military Potential for Fighting in South Vietnam, dated 7 July 1966. []

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Section I. Paras. B.6; B-7 Pages 6 & 7:

B. THE ARMED FORCES

6. We are confident that the North Vietnamese Armed Forces have expanded significantly since early 1964. Neither manpower availability estimates nor evidence on mobilization, however, offers the basis for exact estimates. Among the unresolved questions are the size of the infantry and air defense units and of the forces in or on their way to South Vietnam.

TABLE 2

ESTIMATED NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES SUMMARY

ARMY	345,000-427,000
AIR FORCE	3,500-5,000
NAVY	2,500-3,000
ARMED PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES	27,000-35,000
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TOTAL ARMED FORCES	378,000-470,000
MILITIA POTENTIAL ^a	3,000,000
 North Vietnamese Army Breakdown	
Out-of-Country	
South Vietnam	38,000-55,000
Laos	17,000-20,000
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TOTAL	55,000-75,000

^aThis is composed of elements of the civilian population between 17 and 45, including about one million women. A clear distinction between full-time regional forces, reserves, and militia is not possible from available evidence.

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North Vietnamese Army Breakdown (cont.)

In-Country

Infantry	145,000-175,000
Air Defense ^b	45,000-64,000
Other ^c	100,000-113,000
TOTAL	290,000-352,000

^bThis includes AAA, SAM units, radar, and miscellaneous air defense administration and support. This force operates under an Air Force/Air Defense Headquarters located in Hanoi. An additional 5,000 men involved in air defense are in AAA battalions organic to the infantry divisions and brigades, and are included in the infantry strength figure.

^cThis includes artillery, armor, high command, logistics, engineers, and transportation units.

7. There is no way of resolving this wide range of estimates with certainty. In our view, the lower estimate, which implies a total increase of about 100,000 over the last year or so, is probably somewhat conservative. There is some question about the exact status of the infantry brigades, and the larger figure for the infantry assumes that four of the six brigades carried have been raised to division status. We are not persuaded, however, that the evidence is sufficient to show that all four of these brigades have been upgraded, and we doubt that all units are continuously at full strength. We do think that the strength of infantry and air defense (primarily AAA) units, and the number of troops in or enroute to South Vietnam are probably larger than the lower figures given in Table 2. Therefore, we estimate the strength of the army to be about 375,000, and the total armed forces slightly over 400,000. These estimates are well within Hanoi's capacity, and well above the estimated minimum requirements for in-country forces.

Section II. Paras. A.8; A.9 Pages 7 & 8:

A. THE CURRENT SITUATION

8. The estimated VC/NVA military strength in South Vietnam is between 260,000 and 280,000, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

TYPE	NUMBER	ORGANIZATION
VC Main and Local Forces ^a	63,000	2 division-type headquarters ^b 2 front headquarters 13 regiments 95 battalions (regimental and separate) 173 separate companies 101 separate platoons
North Vietnamese Combat Troops	38,000	3 division-type headquarters ^b 16 regiments 63 battalions (regimental and separate)
Combat Support Personnel	17,000-18,000	
Armed Political Cadre	40,000	
Guerrillas	100,000-120,000	

There is room for error in these estimates. The combat strength of the various units is carried at the last reported total. At any given moment, specific units could be well under or over reported strength because of casualties, desertions, or replacements. Totals for guerrillas, political cadre, and combat support personnel indicate a rough order of magnitude based on available information.

^aMain Forces are subordinate to the Central Office for South Vietnam and to the Military Regions; Local Forces to the Provinces.

^bThe VC and NVA division-type formations in South Vietnam do not conform in structure or strength to the normal NVA division. Forces under the division-type headquarters range from two regiments to as

many as six or seven. Moreover, the field artillery regiment, a normal feature of a NVA division, is not present in any of the division-type formations in South Vietnam. Instead, units armed with mortars and recoilless rifles provide fire support. In addition to those forces regularly composing these formations, local forces and guerrillas are sometimes temporarily assigned to them for the execution of a specific operation.

9. The NVA force in South Vietnam has been built up primarily by the introduction of complete units since January 1965, though preliminary training and some infiltration took place in 1964. Present evidence indicates that some 24,000 NVA troops entered South Vietnam in 1965, and about 24,000 in the first five months of 1966. Acceptance of the presence of NVA units and personnel in South Vietnam often lags several months behind their actual time of entry, and the figures on infiltration are subject to continual revision. Thus, on the basis of past experience, it is almost certain that the total infiltration both in units and replacements so far in 1966 actually exceeds 24,000.

Section II. Para B.15 Page 9:

15. It is estimated that a NVA division has the capability of training 4,500 to 6,000 combat-ready men every three months or possibly 18,000 to 24,000 per year. Reports indicate that since 1964, at least six divisions have conducted training of units for South Vietnam. It is doubtful that all elements of the six divisions would be used concurrently for infiltration training, because of the requirements of normal duties plus the scheduling of the training cycle. Therefore, we estimate that North Vietnam has the capability of training 75,000 to 100,000 men a year for infiltration. By broadening the number of units in the training base or shortening the training cycle, North Vietnam might, with a maximum effort, train double the above number of individual personnel in one year. Actual training performance prior to 1966 has apparently been short of these projections of capabilities.

Section II. Para. B.18 Page 10:

18. We believe we have not yet observed a maximum rate of infiltration. Factors limiting the rate of infiltration to some extent are the weather, time enroute, and the logistical problems of feeding the troops enroute. Because of sickness, desertions, and hostile actions, there is attrition among the troops during infiltration. However, we believe the North Vietnamese have the capability to increase logistical support for the infiltration system and that more important determining factors working on infiltration are the number of troops available for deployment, Hanoi's estimated requirement for them in South Vietnam, and finally, Hanoi's decision to send them there.

TABLE 4

MONTHLY INFILTRATION: 1965-1966*

1965		1966	
January	3,032	January	4,525
February	3,890	February	9,350
March	617	March	5,240
April	2,000	April	210
May	400	May	4,450
June	210		
July	300		
August	450		
September	3,367		
October	6,570		
November	860		
December	2,450		

*These figures include all four accepted infiltration categories. Categories 1 and 2 are based on confirmation by two or more prisoners or returnees, or on a PW statement, the major portion of which is confirmed by other sources. Category 3 is based on PW interrogations which are judged to be probably true, but the major portion of which has not been confirmed by other sources. Category 4 is derived from PW statements not supported by other sources.

Section III. Paras. 39; 40; 41; 42; 43; and 44 Pages 16, 17, & 18:

III THE PROBABLE BUILDUP OF COMMUNIST FORCES

39. Although the VC/NVA are apparently developing higher level command and control headquarters and are including more units under control of these headquarters (division-type and front), it is not anticipated that they will conduct large scale conventional operations, at least not within the time frame under consideration. It is more likely that these headquarters will be used to centralize control over multiple, widespread, and possibly simultaneous operations in their respective areas of responsibility in South Vietnam.

40. Present evidence suggests that the North Vietnamese regime will probably send between 55,000 and 75,000 troops into South Vietnam during 1966. These forces would probably include a number of units and combat support battalions (artillery, mortar, and AAA) and replacements to meet combat losses. The buildup in infantry regiments will probably continue at about one or two per month.

41. We have no reliable evidence of what force goals the Communists hope ultimately to achieve. They are likely, in any event, to reassess their tactics and strategy periodically, especially after the 1966 summer campaign. Present trends indicate that the Communists are probably moving toward a force structure this year of seven to nine division-type headquarters and two front headquarters with 35-40 regiments. By the end of 1966, the Communist regular force strength may total about 125,000, thus representing a net gain of about 50,000 for the year. By the end of 1967, this force may grow to total about 150,000, provided attrition remains substantially at 1966 proportions.

TABLE 6

ESTIMATED COMMUNIST FORCE DEVELOPMENT (Units)

UNITS	Present	1 January 1967
Division-type Headquarters	5	7-9
Front Headquarters	2	2
Regiments	29	35-40
Battalions (Regimental and Separate	158	170-190

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TABLE 7

ESTIMATED COMMUNIST FORCE DEVELOPMENT (Numerical strength)

UNITS	1 January 1966	Present	1 January 1967
VC Main and Local Forces	62,000	63,000	65,000
NVA Troops	16,000	38,000	60,000
Combat Support	17,000-18,000	17,000-18,000	20,000
Political Cadre	40,000	40,000	40,000
Guerrillas	100,000-120,000	100,000-120,000	100,000-120,000

42. We calculate that the force structure outlined above for the end of 1966 would require 30-45 tons of external logistics daily if current levels of activity were sustained. If the level of activity were doubled, the external need would be 45-75 tons per day. Similarly, by the end of 1967, the force postulated would require 40-55 tons of external supplies daily at present levels of activity, but 60-90 tons if the level of activity doubled. Though we cannot be confident of what the requirement would be, we believe the lower figures more nearly represent the actual requirement.

43. We believe that current and estimated future capacities of the Laotian road network are sufficient to meet the requirements of the Communist forces in South Vietnam. Even if this capacity could be reduced, say by one-third, and combat activities were to double, we would still estimate that the capacities would be sufficient on an annual basis to support the requirements for the Communist forces at current and future levels. However, at these higher levels of forces and combat, the excess of road capacities over requirements would be reduced during the rainy season.

44. The projected force structure for the end of 1966 would require heavy recruiting within South Vietnam. The total NVA/VC manpower requirement may be as much as 170,000 and could perhaps go even higher if the rate of combat forced on the Communists increased substantially. If 55,000-75,000 troops are sent from the North and allowed made for combat losses, VC requirements could be between 95,000 and 115,000 recruits. Such an effort is within VC capabilities. By the end of 1967, however, the possible increase in force strength and the combat losses will possibly exceed VC recruitment capabilities, especially if the rate of combat increases. In this case, the Communists might be forced either to scale down their plans for expansion or to step up the rate of infiltration from North Vietnam.

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